

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Shyla Patera and I come here today in Support of House Bill 700. I would like to thank Representative Windy Boy sponsoring this bill. Today, I wear several hats. Most importantly, and the fact of which I am most proud is: I am an employed Montanan. I love my job as an Independent Living Specialist for North Central Independent Living Services . My journey toward full time employment was long. I graduated from Montana State in 1993. I earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. Even with advocates and mentors, my struggle to find and keep a job was monumental. I took a series of national service jobs as well as part time jobs in the field of before/and afterschool childcare in Pennsylvania. I kept interviewing but was often told you're not the employee. I could not move beyond the part time job market.

It took moving home. I worked as a Special Education paraprofessional where I can definitely say the Montana Youth Leadership Forum and College Youth Leadership Forum are needed. Educators often view students by paperwork or the amount of help a student needs. I want the college Youth leadership Forum to be successfully funded. Thank you for deliberating this issue.

Shyla Patera
North Central Independent Living Services
1120 25th Avenue North East
Black Eagle, MT 59414
1-800-823-6245